

VZCZCXYZ0000  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHWR #0081 0261126  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 261126Z JAN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7668  
INFO RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV IMMEDIATE 0145  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 2818

C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 000081

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/CE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [RS](#) [UK](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: POLISH FOREIGN MINISTER'S KYIV "BUSINESS" VISIT

REF: WARSAW 54

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DAN SAINZ FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)  
)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The media mischaracterized FM Radoslaw Sikorski's January 15-16 trip to Ukraine as an effort to resolve the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute, according to an MFA read-out. It was instead a long-planned trip to resolve "thorny" bilateral issues, particularly in the economic area. The Ukrainians, however, raised the gas issue in every meeting. Sikorski told Ukrainian officials that Kyiv's badly-managed public relations efforts were damaging their credibility in Europe. Despite the shadow cast by gas issues, MFA officials called the trip successful on the economic front, but could point to few concrete results. END SUMMARY.

Trip Intended to Deal with Bilateral Issues, Not Gas  
-----

¶2. (C) On January 21, Jaroslaw Bratkiewicz, Director of MFA's Eastern Policy Department, told a group of foreign diplomats that FM Sikorski's long-planned January 15-16 trip to Ukraine was intended to deal with difficult bilateral issues, particularly economic ones. He expressed frustration that the Polish media had mischaracterized the visit as an effort to intervene in the Russia-Ukraine gas conflict. According to Bratkiewicz, the focus was bilateral business, not gas, as reflected in the presence of a large accompanying business delegation and deputy ministers from the Treasury, Economy, Finance and Infrastructure Ministries. The MFA Ukraine desk officer later joked with us that "the timing of Sikorski's trip was perfect -- he should have taken credit for resolving the gas crisis."

¶3. (C) Sikorski met with Ukrainian FM Ohryzko, DPM for European Integration Nemyria, Rada Speaker Lytvyn, and members of opposition parties. MFA officials told us after the briefing that Sikorski was extremely disappointed he was not able to meet with PM Tymoschenko -- then preparing to go to Moscow -- or with President Yushchenko. (COMMENT: Sikorski did, however, participate in the January 14 meeting between Polish President Kaczynski and Yushchenko. Polish MFA officials were reluctant to discuss the substance of the meeting -- probably under Sikorski's orders -- but characterized it as "hectic and frenzied, with a lot of phone calls being made in the middle of the discussion." Reftel) Tymoschenko is expected to visit Poland in March to discuss issues related to the 2012 Eurocup competition.

¶4. (SBU) Bratkiewicz said the Ukrainians raised the issue of the gas conflict in every meeting, arguing that Russia was attempting to control Ukraine's gas transit network, isolate Ukraine from the West, and seek retribution for Ukraine's support to Georgia. Sikorski told the Ukrainians that they were losing the public relations war with Russia and damaging

their credibility in Europe. He urged the Ukrainians to clarify their side of the story.

#### Sikorski Raised "Thorny" Bilateral Issues

-----

15. (C) Bratkiewicz said Sikorski had strongly advocated: 1) easing the non-transparent and cumbersome regulations governing Polish firms in Ukraine; 2) addressing discrepancies in Ukraine's tariff and VAT refund regime; and 3) connecting Polish and Ukrainian transport networks in preparation for the 2012 Eurocup competition. Bratkiewicz said the Ministries of Infrastructure on both sides agreed to enhance cooperation on connecting roads and rail networks. When pressed for other accomplishments, he said only that Sikorski had replied positively to a Ukrainian request for Polish help in streamlining Ukrainians' visas to Schengen countries. (Note: Poland's entry into Schengen a year ago complicated Ukrainian travel to Poland.)

16. (C) COMMENT. During the briefing, Bratkiewicz carefully avoided assigning blame to either Russia or Ukraine for the recent gas conflict. In private, however, his subordinates told us they believed Russia's primary political motivation was to discredit and isolate Ukraine--a goal that trumped the short-term financial losses suffered by Gazprom.  
ASHE